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ABSTRACT

Previous research has shown that two relatively uncorrelated orientations; "traditional' and "progressive" underlie educational attitudes of teachers, professors, students in colleges of education, and other adults. The data of the present study, in which 40 female teachers' perceptions of their students were collected, permitted an extension of the work on educational orientations. Specifically, it was hypothesized that teachers' perceptions of their students would be organized around the same two traditional and progressive dimensions found by Kerlinger in other research contexts. A Q factor analysis of teacher perceptions of their students, obtained in free response interviews, replicated the educational orientations found by Kerlinger and others, despite major differences in educational context studied and in method of data collection. Kerlinger's work was extended by discovery of a new "communal" orientation, reflecting a teacher tendency to perceive students through family and intragroup categories. Regression analyses showed that this previously unreported orientation was most common among inner-city teachers, the "progressive" perceptual orientation among suburban teachers, and the "traditional" orientation among older teachers and those raised in town or rural areas. (Author/AM)

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Teachers' Perceptions of Students: Traditional, Progressive, and Emerging "Communal" Orientations

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Teachers' Perceptions of Students: Traditional, Progressive, and Emerging "Communal" Orientations

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A Q factor analysis of teacher perceptions of their own students, obtained in free-response interviews, replicated the "traditional" and "progressive" orientations found by Kerlinger and others, despite major differences in educational context studied and in method of data collection. Kerlinger's work was extended by discovery of a new "communal" orientation, reflecting a teacher tendency to perceive students through family and intragroup categories. Regression analyses showed that this previously unreported orientation was most common among inner-city teachers, the "progressive" perceptual orientation among suburban teachers, and the "traditional" orientation among older teachers and those raised in towns or rural areas.

Teachers' Perceptions of Students: Traditional, Progressive, and Emerging "Communal" Orientations

A substantial research effort by Kerlinger and others has shown that two relatively uncorrelated orientations--"traditional" and "progressive"--underlie educational attitudes of teachers, professors, students in colleges of education, and other adults (Kerlinger, 1967b, Wehling & Charters, 1969; Yee & Fruchter, 1971). Carefully designed and validated attitude scales were used to isolate these two patterns of response. Persons classified as "traditional" were described as thinking in terms of such categories as "discipline, subject matter, and moral standards," while the "progressive" in educational attitudes was described as thinking in terms of such categories as "child needs, individual differences, and social learning (Kerlinger, 1967b)."

Kerlinger (1966, 1967a) later expanded his work beyond general educational attitudes to an examination of perceptions of traits characterizing "good" teachers, using respondents similar to those used in his attitude research. Results showed these trait perceptions clustered around two dimensions--"person-oriented" and "task-oriented." Further study showed

that, in factor analytic terms, these teacher trait factors spanned "the same two-dimensional second-order factor space" as the two educational attitude factors isolated earlier (Kerlinger & Pedhazur, 1968).

The data of the present study, in which teachers' perceptions of their students were collected, permitted an extension of the work on educational orientations reviewed above. Specifically, it was hypothesized that teachers' perceptions of their students would be organized around the same two traditional and progressive dimensions found by Kerlinger in other research contexts.

Method

Subjects

Forty women were interviewed, all of whom were teachers of the first or second grade. Twenty teachers were interviewed from 13 lower-class Chicago public schools with all-black, mostly lower-class enrollments; and 20 teachers from 10 white, predominantly upper-middle class Chicago suburban public schools.

Eleven teacher characteristics were assessed by means of a post-interview questionnaire, for later use as predictors in regression analyses. They were city versus suburban

school location, grade taught, class size, school size, age, years of teaching experience, racial origin, size of community in which teacher grew up, socio-economic class during teacher's childhood and adolescence, level of education and quality of college grades, and marital status.

Interview Procedure and Analysis

The data reported here were collected for a broader study aimed at specifying differences between inner-city and suburban teachers in the categories through which they customarily perceive their students. Hence the fixed-response questionnaire approach to data-gathering was discarded in favor of two modifications of the Role Construct Repertory Technique or "Rep Test," an interview technique developed by George A. Kelly (1955, I, pp. 219-244). Teachers were interviewed individually, and each was asked to write the names of her students on 3-by-5 inch cards--one name on each card. In the Free Sort phase, cards were spread out before the teacher and the interviewer said, "Sort your children into groups in some way that seems important to you. You may put as many or as few children into each group as you wish, and you may have as many or as few groups as you wish." When the first sort was completed, the interviewer said, "Tell me

on what basis you sorted your children?" Teachers' descriptions were recorded. This process was repeated until the teacher had completed six different sorts, or until two hours of the interview time had elapsed.

In the Trio phase of the interview, student name cards were numbered and the interviewer placed a random trio of student names before the teacher saying, "In what important way are two of these students alike, but different from the third?" The teacher's reply was recorded. Next the three name cards were replaced in the packet, and another trio of student names was selected by the interviewer on the basis of a table of random numbers. This process was repeated until a three-hour interview time limit was reached, or until 20 different trio descriptions had been obtained.

A content analysis (Holsti, 1969) was performed on the interview typescripts. Since the categories according to which the interviews were analyzed had not been pre-selected by the investigator, they were generated from the interview typescripts. This was done by randomly selecting twelve teacher interviews, and having them analyzed separately by two judges, for "every separable unit of meaning." The two judges then met to resolve any differences in categorization.

The "standards" used to define a construct were, then, exact words and phrases taken from teacher interviews. Examples of the standards generated for defining constructs are given in Appendix A to this report.

Categories obtained in this way were then used by two judges as a basis for analyzing all forty interview typescripts. In ascertaining the presence or absence of each of the categories in each of the 40 interviews, interjudge reliability reached a level of .88 (Holsti, 1969, p. 140). Only those constructs common to at least 80 per cent of city or 80 per cent of suburban teachers were retained for further analysis. For the purpose of factor analysis, presence of a construct in a teacher's interview was coded +1, while absence of a construct was coded -1, yielding the appropriate raw score matrix for application of Q factor analysis in the case of dichotomized responses (Holley & Guilford, 1964).

Results

The 39 common constructs derived through content analysis, are listed in Table 1, where they have been given brief, simplified labels for the purpose of this report. Complete standards for scoring each construct are found in an earlier unpublished report of this research (Weinberg, 1975).

Table 1

Perceptual Constructs Derived

from Content Analysis

Construct Name	Number of interviews containing construct		
	City only	Suburbs only	Total
Reading achievement	20	20	20
Math achievement	16	19	35
Handwriting	9	16	25
Art	11	16	27
Grade level	18	19	37
Attendance	16	6	22
Auxiliary personnel	16	14	30
General school progress	20	20	40
Maturation level	17	20	37
Academic aptitude	20	20	40
Ability-achievement gap	17	16	33
School attitude	15	17	32
Speed of learning	19	20	39
Attention span	18	18	36
Speed of paperwork	19	20	39
Effort: School work	19	20	39
Neatness vs. messiness	8	17	25
Works independently vs. constantly seeking help	18	19	37
Talking: Quantity	18	20	38
Talking: Quality	13	18	31
Child's sex	20	20	40
Illness, speech problem	18	17	35
Activity level	12	18	30
Mood	16	17	33
Obedient vs. disobedient	20	20	40
Copes vs. easily upset: Interpersonal context	18	17	35

Table 1--Continued

Construct Name	Number of interviews containing construct		
	City only	Suburbs only	Total
Secure, self-confident vs. defeatist	11	18	29
Outgoing vs. shy	13	19	32
Popular vs. unpopular	18	17	35
Withdrawn, "loner"	16	14	30
Aggressive physically vs. nonaggressive	17	15	32
Attractive vs. unattractive	18	11	29
Personal interaction with teacher	11	16	27
Home care: Quality	19	16	35
Serious hardship	18	7	25
Description of parents	20	18	38
Dress	16	7	23
Family size, birth order, adoption, etc.	18	13	31
Parent contact with teacher	16	9	25

Note. In order to be included here, a construct must have been present in the interview typescripts of at least 80 per cent of inner-city teacher interviews (16 of 20), or 80 per cent of suburban teacher interviews (16 of 20).

A principal components factor analysis of the correlations between teachers in construct use was conducted--sometimes called a Q factor analysis. Three teacher factors were extracted, varimax rotation procedures applied, and factor scores computed. Table 2 shows the proportions of total and common

Table 2

Summary of Factor Loading Matrix

for Three Teacher Factors (Teacher "Types")

	Factor number			
	1	2	3	Communality
Contribution of factor (Eigenvalue)	19.72	3.00	1.81	24.53
Per cent total variance	47.30	7.50	4.50	59.30
Per cent common variance	63.60	9.70	5.80	79.10

variance accounted for by the three-factor solution. The arrays of perceptual constructs most closely associated with each of the three teacher perceptual factors, or "types," are shown in Table 3. Those five constructs that appeared in all 40 teacher interviews, labelled "constant" constructs, are listed

Table 3

Construct Arrays Associated With Each Of Three Teacher Factors

(Array of "Constant" Constructs appended)

Constructs differentiating Type 1 teachers		Constructs differentiating Type 2 teachers		Constructs differentiating Type 3 teachers	
Construct name	Normalized factor score[a]	Construct name	Normalized factor score[a]	Construct name	Normalized factor score[a]
Copes vs. easily upset: Interpersonal context	.99	Family size, birth order	.97	Handwriting	.99
Math achievement	.98	Works indepndtly vs. seeking help	.97	Math achievement	.99
Secure, self-confdnt vs. defeatst	.94	Effort: Schl work	.96	Serious hardship	.94
Talking: Quality	.92	Attendance	.95	Neatness vs. messiness	.92
Activity level	.88	Home care: Qalty	.95	School attitude	.87
Talking: Quantity	.85	Dress	.90	Personal inter actn w/tchr	- .91
Attendance	- .98	Attractive vs. unattractive	.90	Secure, self-con fdnt vs. deaftst	- .94
"Constant" Constructs[b]		"Constant" Constructs[b]		"Constant" Constructs[b]	
Reading achievement		Reading achievement		Reading achievement	
General school progress		General school progress		General school progress	
Academic aptitude		Academic aptitude		Academic aptitude	
Child's sex		Child's sex		Child's sex	
Obedient vs. disobednt		Obedient vs. disobednt		Obedient vs. disobednt	

[a]Normalized factor scores indicate which perceptual constructs were most likely (+), and least likely (-), to be mentioned in their interviews by the three teacher "types." Only those constructs with factor scores beyond +.85 or -.85 listed.

[b]Five constructs appeared in the interviews of all 40 teachers. They are here referred to as "constant" constructs.

under each of the three teacher types in Table 3, since they are equally associated with the perceptual frame of reference of all three teacher types.

Three judges (a professor of education, a primary grade teacher, and a graduate student of education) who evaluated the four arrays of constructs in Table 3, reached similar conclusions. The array of constructs differentiating Type 1 teachers was judged as primarily reflecting a "personal adjustment" or "progressive" orientation; as evident in the tendency to perceive students through constructs such as "Copes vs. easily upset: Interpersonal context," "Secure, self-confident vs. defeatist," "Talking: Quality," "Activity level," and "Talking: Quantity."

The Type 2 array was judged as reflecting an "intragroup relations" or "communal" orientation, as evident in the Type 2 teacher's tendency to perceive students through family-related constructs, or constructs reflecting classroom small-group dynamics--for example, "Family size, birth order, adoption, etc.," "Home care: Quality," "Attendance," and "Dress," reflecting a family orientation, and "Works independently vs. constantly seeking help" and "Attractive vs. unattractive" reflecting a tendency to perceive students in terms of classroom interpersonal dynamics.

Both the Type 3 array and the array of five "constant" constructs

were judged as reflecting a "traditional" perceptual orientation, evident in the tendency of all teachers, to some degree, and Type 3 teachers, particularly, to perceive students through the traditional categories of academic achievement, academic ability, obedience and neatness, and sex role. Further, Type 3 teachers showed a tendency to underutilize categories such as "Personal interaction with teacher" and "Secure, self-confident vs. defeatist," reflecting personal, rather than only task-related concern with students.

In the final step of data analysis, a series of 33 regression analyses was conducted, employing as predictors the 11 teacher characteristics assessed by post-interview questionnaire. In the first set of 11 analyses, each of the 11 teacher characteristics was entered into a regression equation last, to assess the significance of its contribution to prediction of the teacher Type 1 factor loadings. The same series of 11 regression analyses was repeated using teacher Type 2 factor loadings as the criterion, and finally using teacher Type 3 factor loadings as the criterion. Entering each of the 11 predictors into the regression equation last provided a "stringent" test of the increment in criterion variance accounted for by the predictor, since predictive power was tested only after the variance attributable to the other 10 predictors had been removed (Draper & Smith, 1966, pp. 72, 167-169; Walberg, 1973). Those

predictors significantly or marginally associated with each of the three teacher "types" are listed in Table 4.

Conclusions

The Type 1 and Type 3 patterns of teacher construct use found here replicated Kerlinger's progressive and traditional educational orientations. This replication carries considerable significance since the effect of these two orientations had to be powerful enough to survive important differences in design between the present study and Kerlinger's earlier work. A free-response rather than fixed-response technique was used here for data collection; and teacher respondents were asked for perceptions of their own students, rather than for perceptions of "ideal" teacher traits, or for general educational attitudes. These findings provide support for Kerlinger's traditional-progressive typology of educational thought.

However, a possible modification of Kerlinger's "two-dimensional view of educational thought is suggested by the discovery of the five "constant" constructs (Table 3) which, though judged "traditional," were found in the interviews of all 40 teacher respondents. The free-response interview technique used here may have made it possible to detect a core set of traditional categories common to the frame of reference of all teachers of this grade level--even those who make major use of "progressive" or "communal" categories.

Table 4

Regression Analyses: Teacher Characteristics as Predictors of Three Teacher Factors (Teacher "Types")

Teacher characteristics predicting Type 1 factor loadings			Teacher characteristics predicting Type 2 factor loadings			Teacher characteristics predicting Type 3 factor loadings		
Teacher Characteristic	F[a]	p	Teacher Characteristic	F[a]	p	Teacher Characteristic	F[a]	p
School location (suburban	11.98	.002	School location (inner-city)	6.17	.02	Size community of origin (sm city, town, rural)	7.20	.01
Grade taught (2nd grade)	6.40	.02	Size community of origin (lrge city)	5.12	.03	Teacher age (older)	4.71	.04
Teacher age (younger)	2.21	.15	Teacher age (older)	3.47	.07	Grade taught (1st grade)	4.65	.04
			Racial origin (Afro-American)	2.54	.12			

[a]Univariate F ratio, testing increment in factor variance accounted for when listed teacher characteristic was entered last into the regression equation, after the other 10 characteristics assessed in post-interview questionnaire.

An extension of Kerlinger's work was suggested by the discovery of a new teacher perceptual orientation, here labeled "communal" (teacher Type 2 in Tables 3 and 4). This orientation was found most frequently among inner-city teachers, and involved a tendency to perceive students in terms of family relationships and classroom and community intragroup interaction. Type 2 teachers also perceived their students through constructs emphasizing mutual support and cooperation within the classroom. For example, "Works independently vs. constantly seeking help" (Table 3) involved students' capacities to complete school tasks and settle interpersonal differences individually or through mutual assistance, without having to constantly ask the teacher's help. In short, "communal" teachers perceived the responsibility and justification for student behavior as residing more heavily in the functioning of the small groups of which each youngster is a member, than did "traditional" or "progressive" teachers. For the "communal" teacher, students' basic identities are tied to the properties of the various small groups of which they are a part--neighborhood, family, school, and classroom.

The significance of this finding lies in the congruence of the "communal" orientation with an educational philosophy

expressed recently by a series of Afro-American educators, such as Sizemore (1973), Slaughter (1973), and Wilson (1972). These educators have conceptualized the "ideal school for Afro-American children" as a "community family" rooted in the daily lives of parents, teachers, students, and all other members of the local community (Wilson, 1972)." While the "communal" perceptual factor may prove unstable in future research among inner-city teachers, and might well be absorbed into the dualistic "traditional" versus "progressive" framework in a second order factor analysis, it was judged worthy of interpretation here for two reasons: 1) its similarity in content to the avowed educational goals of many Afro-American educators, and 2) its relationship to research showing that Afro-American students do, in fact, show more cooperative interaction with peers than do white middle-class students (Lucker, Rosenfield, Sikes, & Aronson, 1976; Richmond & Weiner, 1973; Sampson & Kardush, 1965). Ultimately the question of whether or not to interpret a factor such as the "communal" teacher type would appear to depend upon the level of analysis selected. If the purpose of study is definition of broad, nationally shared or occupation-wide attitudes and perceptions, then the "communal" factor may prove ephemeral. On the other

hand, if the research is aimed at "middle level inquiry" then those systematic variations in response which may offer clues to important subgroup differences among teachers should be reported, as recommended by Lortie (1973). Recent studies showing that differences in teachers' perceptions of their students predict differences in teachers' behaviors toward those same students (Brophy & Good, 1974; Good & Brophy, 1972; Silberman, 1969), point to the value of studying perceptual frames of reference generic to teachers in specific settings.

Evaluation of the results of the present study must take account of the limitations of the sample and data employed. Sample size was small, and teachers were recruited from the first and second grades only and from a limited geographic area. Generalizability of the results is restricted accordingly. On the other hand the successful replication of Kerlinger's two educational orientations suggested that some confidence can be placed in the appropriateness of the method of data collection and analysis used here. In addition, confidence in the stability of the regression analyses was strengthened by the consistency found between present results and common trends in the research literature--i.e., teachers using a "progressive" perceptual orientation here tended to

be younger and to teach in the suburbs; while teachers using a "traditional" orientation tended to be older and to have grown up in a rural area, town, or small city. Ultimately, of course, the reliability of the results reported here can be judged only on the basis of studies aimed at replication.

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Appendix A

Excerpts from Scoring "Standards"

Used to Define Perceptual Constructs

Reading Achievement

Good in comprehension and in knowing the words
Over half way through the primer
Top group of readers
Reading is coming along very nicely
Especially good in reading
Very quick to recognize words
Reading at the fifth grade level
Read beautifully
Having trouble with reading
Slow readers
Doesn't do well in reading
Using our remedial reading program
With reading problems so severe he seems to be regressing
Has no idea that when you put the sounds together you get a word
A non-reader

Handwriting

His manuscript is perfect
Know how to form letters; writing skills are very good
Form their letters perfectly and their spacing is excellent
All his letters are made backwards
Make letters too small
Poor handwriting

General School Progress

Does a good job at every skill
He understands! He's just a doll. He doesn't have any trouble with anything
Academically ahead in everything
Work is very good

Appendix A--Continued

General School Progress--Continued

Showing some progress in their work
Doing a little below average academically
His grades are failing and everything
Having quite a bit of trouble with everything
Just not learning
About a year-and-a-half behind
Very slow in everything
Doesn't understand anything
Making no progress at all--absolutely none

Works Independently vs. Constantly Seeking Help

Can do his math book without any explanation at all. In fact he's worked most of his math book just because he's wanted to do things, you know
One of the children who works on his own. When he finishes his work, he goes and makes up problems or writes a story
Able to do most things by themselves without being told
Don't have to ask me before every little thing they do
In arithmetic, this first group will go in on their own and start something
If they've finished all their work they will immediately go and find something else to keep them busy. They'll find something constructive to do
This child runs up to me after every three words she writes
Constantly come up and question me about things. They can understand it real well, but they'll still question me
He expects everything to be done for him by the teacher
Very hard for these children to think of things on their own. They are always coming up to me and saying, "What can I do?"

Copes vs. Easily Upset: Interpersonal Context

A child who can take care of himself, handle himself, stick up for himself
Usually she just walks away and ignores trouble
Can handle any situation--socially, emotionally, academically
He's very, very rarely ever upset
She just goes along her way. She doesn't get into altercations over ridiculous little things

Appendix A--Continued

Copes vs. Easily Upset--Continued

They don't feel rejected if they're not chosen for a part
It's hard for me to calm him down if he gets excited or mad. If he's really mad he throws things
Constantly in tears. Yesterday she must have been in tears two or three times. Someone had said a cross word to her or someone had poked her
If she looses her pencil it's a major thing
More easily upset when things go wrong
When she gets upset she is absolutely obsessed and stubborn too

Home Care: Quality

A real good home background
Their mothers are interested in them
You can tell the mother cares
Children with a fine family life. Get the right kind of encouragement and they respond. From nice normal families
She's a normal parent
They're taken care of well
These children are given more advantages--not from an economic view, but from the amount of time the parents spend with them
About six children from my room live in the same house with a baby sitter, because their mothers work. They live there permanently, except on weekends. The woman takes very very good care of them
Not very well taken care of at home
Her mother doesn't seem to be really interested in her
I don't think he has too much supervision at home. I think there's too many kids, and the mother doesn't know what to do with all these kids
Hasn't had much attention from her parents

Family Size, Birth Order, Adoption, Etc.

She comes from a family of nine
He's got six sisters and no brothers and he's the baby
They come from small families. One is an only child and in this boy's family there's only two
All of these children are the oldest in their family.

Appendix A--Continued

Family Size, Birth Order--Continued

At home this child is the youngest one
These are all middle children in birth order
He is an identical twin
He is an adopted child